UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Report on a Mission to Gambia
(10 September to 2 October 1988)

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November 1988
Addis Ababa

This report is the sole responsibility of the writer. It has been submitted to the United Nations Department of Technical Co-operation for Development (UNDP/CD)
1. Introduction

The mission was undertaken at the request of the Government to assist in the preparation of a project document for the 1993 population and housing census of the Gambia.

Following the Government request, UNPA asked the Fund's possible level of assistance. The Fund indicated that the census project document should cover the entire census operation and that it would then provide assistance in close consultation with other donors.

The UNFPA Demographic Statistics Advisor arrived in Banjul for the mission from 10 September 1992 and started discussions with the Central Statistics Department (CSD) on 13 September. The mission ended on 1 October and before then the UNFPA Country Director in Dakar who also covers The Gambia met to Banjul for discussions on the census project formulation. The names of persons with whom discussions were held during the mission are listed in Annex I. I wish to express my appreciation and thanks to them and other staff members of UNFPA and the Central Statistics Department for their cooperation and assistance.

2. Background

The Central Statistics Department (CSD) of the Ministry of Economic Planning and Industrial Development (MEPID) has responsibility for decennial population and housing censuses.

The last population and housing census of Gambia was conducted in April 1963. The pre-enumeration and enumeration phases of the census was organized by the CSD with minimal external technical support in the form of short-term consultancy and advisory services.

The consultancy assistance was in connection with the design of the census questionnaire and preparation of enumerator's and supervisor's instructions manuals and draft tabulation programmes.

At the data processing stage, however, the assistance of a resident data processing expert was provided by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany under a bilateral technical assistance programme.

There has been a high turnover of CSD staff at the professional level since the 1963 census. Thus almost all the staff who were principally responsible for the planning of the 1963 census would not be available for the 1993 census.

At the time of the mission the processing of the 1993 census data had been completed but only the first of the census publications: General Report had been published. Other census reports planned to be published are:

- Statistics on Settlements and Enumeration Areas
- Housing and Household Characteristics
- Economic Characteristics
- Educational Characteristics
- Socio-economic Indicators on Women

Each of the above census reports is expected to contain statistical tables and related evaluation and analysis of the data. In the case of the Statistics on Settlements and Enumeration Areas some errors had been detected and manual corrections were in progress.

It was reported that the computer print-outs of tabulations for the remaining census reports were ready for publication but the data were to be entered in a micro-computer to produce the required format of the tabulations before they were sent for printing. The evaluation and analysis of the various sets of data were also at different stages of completion.

At the time of the mission, a request had been sent to UNFPA for assistance to cover the printing costs of the remaining census publications.

It had been planned that an inter-censal national demographic survey would be conducted in 1986 to update the 1983 population census data and a project document was prepared accordingly in May 1985. It was then the expectation that work on the 1983 census including the publication of the census reports would be completed by the end of 1986. However activities in connection with the 1983 census could not be completed by the date expected and further, the staff turnover was such that the proposed demographic survey could not be carried out.

Toward the end of the mission the Director of CSD indicated that approval had just been received for the "Institutional Strengthening Project within the Framework of Social Dimensions of Structural Adjustment (SDA)". The project is to be funded by the African Development Fund (ADF), UNDP and the Government of Gambia and the objectives include the strengthening of the CSD. One of the activities under the SDA project is the establishment of a Household Survey Section at CSD together with the institution of a permanent household surveys programme to produce data relating to the social and economic dimensions of structural adjustment.

3. Census Project Document

During the mission a draft project document (Annex II) was prepared with the active participation of the head of the Demographic Section, CSD. Prior to the drafting of the document discussions were held with the Director of CSD and a number of government ministries/departments consulted.

The underlying principle adopted in the preparation of the project document was that the project budget proposal covering contribution from external sources would cover a period not exceeding four consecutive calendar years. This is in conformity with UNFPA policy regarding financial periods in the design and formulation of a project.

The starting date of the census project indicated on the cover of the document was therefore selected such that there would be sufficient time for the processing of the document including the provision of the
major inputs from external sources; and also ensure that the budgetary provision would cover major pre-enumeration activities as well as the enumeration phase, the processing of the census data and the publication of the main statistical tabulations.

It is however expected that prior to the formal launching of the project a number of preliminary activities will be initiated to ensure that the CSD will be in a state of readiness for smooth implementation of the census preparatory activities. Details of the preliminary activities have been included in the project work plan.

The Government also intends asking for pre-project funding from UNFPA or other donor agency for fellowships in census cartography, demographic statistics and data processing. This has become necessary in view of the high turnover of staff at the CSD.

A major component of the project budget covering contribution from UNFPA/other donor agencies is local personnel payments. It was pointed out that in view of the current economic situation of the country and the implementation of a structural adjustment programme, assistance in the payment of local costs would be essential for the implementation of the project. An amount of US$280,960.00 is therefore being requested to cover payments to the temporary staff required for the project. These are: field mappers, enumerators, supervisors, coders and data entry operators.

Provision has also been made in the project document for a long-term resident international data processing expert. It should be pointed out though that the CSD has a Programmer/Analyst with the necessary expertise for the processing of census data. He was the counterpart of the international data processing expert during the processing of the 1983 population and housing census data.

The amount included in the project budget for a data processing expert may therefore be regarded as a contingent provision which may be needed only if the CSD Programmer/Analyst is not at post during the processing of the 1993 census data. Such strategy has been adopted in view of the recent experience of depletion of professional staff at the CSD through resignations.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

As stated earlier, the CSD will be responsible for the 1993 population and housing census. The department, however, does not have all the expertise required for all aspects of the census. It is therefore suggested that additional staff should be seconded from other government ministries/departments for census work. In this connection, it is strongly recommended that the census needs to be regarded as a major national exercise requiring the effective collaboration of various government agencies with the CSD playing the leading and co-ordinating role.

CSD should ensure that the outstanding work on the 1983 census is closely monitored and the staff effectively supervised. Indeed, efforts need to be redoubled to complete the work as soon as possible so that the preliminary activities in respect of the 1993 census could be started.
Further, if it is realized that there might be some delay in the completion of the evaluation and analysis of the 1983 census data then CSD should consider publishing the statistical tables with explanatory notes of the census concepts as separate census volumes and the analytical report(s) published later.

The necessary arrangements for the training of staff in census cartography, demographic statistics and computer programming should be made as soon as possible to ensure that the training would be completed and the trainees available for census work by July 1991. The Government request for pre-project funding for fellowships should therefore be sent to UNFPA and/or other donor agency immediately.

Finally, CSD should ensure that the draft project document is reviewed, finalized and submitted to UNFPA through the Resident Representative, UNDP, Banjul as soon as possible.
ANNEX I

LIST OF PERSONS WITH WHOM DISCUSSIONS WERE HELD DURING THE MISSION

Central Statistics Department

1. Mr. A. S. M. N'dow, Director
2. Mr. Hassan Jong, Programmer/Analyst
3. Mr. A. Ceesay, Senior Statistician
4. Mr. S. Bayo, Statistician
5. Mr. S. Sonko, Assistant Statistician
6. Mr. B. Daffeh, Senior Enumerator

Ministry of Economic Planning and Industrial Development

1. Mr. A. M. Ngum, Director of Planning

Other Government Ministries/Departments

1. Mr. M. Camara, Under Secretary, Ministry of Local Government and Lands

2. Mr. Thanasi, Director of Information, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
3. Mr. E. A. Auber, Government Printer
4. Mr. B. Barry, Director, Surveys Department
5. Mr. B. E. Cham, Head of Cartography Section, Surveys Department
6. Mr. Njie, Education Planner, Ministry of Education

UNDP

1. Mr. M. Lubega, Resident Representative
2. Mr. N. Kahala, Deputy Resident Representative
3. Ms. Wilma Goppel, UNFPA Country Director
4. Mrs. F. Tambajang, Assistant Programme Officer